UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

JAN - 6 2010

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Environmental Assessment of the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Bay Education Center Rockport, Texas

LOCATION: Rockport, Texas

SUMMARY: The Mission-Aransas NERR is the newest addition to the reserve system designated in 2006 with the University of Texas at Austin Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) as its lead agency. UTMSI has been implementing research on coastal ecosystems and the processes that govern them since 1941. As NOAA's partner in the Mission-Aransas NERR, UTMSI plans to build a reserve Bay Education Center to accommodate an auditorium, visitor center, and offices of the City of Rockport. The proposed facility is a joint effort between the City of Rockport, Aransas County Navigation District and the Mission-Aransas NERR. It will be located within an existing 1.72-acre Aransas County Navigation District parcel currently serving as office space and parking adjacent to Rockport Beach. The site is within the reserve boundary and will be managed jointly by Mission-Aransas NERR and the City of Rockport. Implementation of the proposed project will occur on a previously modified/disturbed area within the Navigation District parcel. It is anticipated that construction of the elevated education center will not result in significant impacts on the human and the natural environment. The facility will be developed under NOAA grant NA06NOS4200210.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Donna Wieting, Acting Director
Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management
National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact, including the environmental assessment, is enclosed for your information.

Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above. Also, please send one copy of your comments to me at the NOAA Strategic Planning Office (PPI/SP), Room 15603, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure